

From Crisis to Opportunity

Pastor Joseph Clark – September 6, 2020

Blessed is the man who remains steadfast under trial, for when he has stood the test, he will receive the crown of life, which God has promised to those who love him.

— James 1:12

If we endure, we will also reign with him; if we deny him, he also will deny us.

— 2 Timothy 2:12

For I know the plans I have for you, declares the LORD, plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope.

— Jeremiah 29:11

The morning after Jesus' crucifixion, His disciples were in mourning. They were scared, heart broken, confused, and in disbelief. And yet, in a short period of time they became courageous and bold apostles of Jesus Christ. They established the early church and continued the ministry of the one true God.

Saul was a persecutor and murderer of Christians who was humbled and blinded by the Lord. Christ Himself asked him "Saul, why do you persecute me?" By the Grace of God, he became a major leader and influencer in the early church, and he wrote 25% of the Bible.

How is the grace of God working in your life to turn crisis into opportunity for you to be an asset to God's kingdom?

What was the worst dilemma you have ever faced? I remember as a child when our family faced unfortunate human events. During those dilemmas, my parents would square their shoulders and condition us that "There is nothing that we cannot overcome as a family." These were poignant moments for my family, and we did overcome and recover as a result of my parents' faith, hope, leadership, and resolve.

When do we define ourselves as human beings? Do our defining moments occur during difficult times or when everything is going rosy? Close your eyes for a few seconds and remember one of your greatest defining moments to date. Was it a defining moment because it came with little cost or because it had great difficulty attached to it? Did you step out of the rut of daily life and discover different paths or truer answers?

I propose that we must embrace the challenges presented by difficult times. Before you go questioning my sanity, allow me to explain myself. After all, who would propose such a preposterous notion as embracing the difficulties imposed on us by our worst nightmares becoming reality?

Simply put, we discover our defining moments and glorify God during times of challenging circumstances.

"Adversity is not simply a tool. It is God's most effective tool for the advancement of our spiritual lives. The circumstances and events that we see as setbacks are oftentimes the very things that launch us into periods of intense spiritual growth. Once we begin to understand this, and accept it as a spiritual fact of life, adversity becomes easier to bear."

- Pastor Charles Stanley

The Chinese word for crisis is a compound of "danger" and "opportunity." Do we fall down because gravity governs objects that are heavier than air? Or do we fall down to learn how to get back up? And once we are on our feet, are we not wiser, better, and stronger people? Scientists state that the fate of everything is determined by the atomic structure of everything. The Holy Spirit tells us in The Word that our fate is determined by our choice to accept or reject Christ. This gives rise to the legitimate question: "Just what is it that we actually have unfettered control over?" The answer: how we respond with hope in God to poignant moments, and how we choose to apply our faith to the world around us. This is of paramount importance in life! This applies equally to the elite, the fortunate, the less fortunate, and the marginalized.

The Greek philosopher Protagoras was famous for the Maxim: "Man is the measure of all things." During our personally difficult times do we want the substance of our

lives to be sweet or sour? Because God has taught us that we determine that flavor. We are the measure of all that is good and all that is intolerable in our lives. How? By receiving Christ's salvation and becoming part of His kingdom. By walking our faith. By living our faith!

We do well to remember the ancient Chinese proverb that tells us that there are three things that never return: "the spoken word, the sped arrow, and the neglected opportunity!" I urge you to resolve not to neglect the sanctifying opportunity found in challenging moments. Not to neglect applying what has been taught, modelled, demonstrated, and commanded by God Himself in The Word.

"The individual who knows the score about life sees difficulties as opportunities."

- Rev. Norman Vincent Peale

The doing of it demands personal reflection and discipline to habitually turn the chaotic flotsam of our daily lives to our spiritual advantage. It requires of us the same idealism and passion that the Apostles demonstrated during instances when we are least inclined to be faithful and virtuous.

Is it easy? In all the world there is nothing more difficult and more worthy of the effort. And like any great endeavor, the more difficult the road, the more satisfaction lies in the completion of the journey.

Whatever wrong you have suffered; it is a temporary crisis. A temporary crisis which could well be your defining moment. History has taught us that during times of challenging circumstances we find our true God-given personal greatness. This greatness is in each and every one of us and I believe without mental reservation that you, my brothers and sisters, have the potential to take your problems by the horns and apply the wisdom and grace of Christ Jesus. You are capable of His peace and harmony.

“You are entitled to know that two entities occupy your body. One of these entities is motivated by and responds to the impulse of fear. The other is motivated by and responds to the impulse of faith. Will you be guided by faith or will you allow fear to overtake you?”

- Napoleon Hill

What are your hopes and dreams? What are your ambitions? Have you got a plan to turn crisis into opportunity through Christ? When the worst happens to you and you are discouraged, defeated, downtrodden, or victimized, remember that God the Father is with you. “There is nothing that we cannot overcome as a family.”

With all my heart I wish you all the success, love, peace, and harmony you deserve.

Sources:

Biblegateway.com. 2020. Biblegateway.Com: A Searchable Online Bible in Over 150 Versions And 50 Languages. [online] Available at: <<https://www.biblegateway.com/>> [Accessed 3 June 2020].

Topical Bible - Bible Verses by Topic. <https://www.openbible.info/topics/>.

(n.d.). BrainyQuote. <https://www.brainyquote.com/>

30 inspiring Christian quotes. (2020, February 10).

Crosswalk.com. <https://www.crosswalk.com/faith/spiritual-life/inspiring-quotes/30-inspiring-christian-quotes.html>

What does the Bible say about crisis? (n.d.). <https://www.openbible.info/topics/crisis>

What does the Bible say about opportunity? (n.d.). <https://www.openbible.info/topics/opportunity>

Dictionary by Merriam-Webster: America's most-trusted online dictionary.